

JOHN McCAIN
ARIZONA

CHAIRMAN
COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE,
SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

United States Senate

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241 RUSSELL SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0303
(202) 224-2235

5353 NORTH 16TH STREET
SUITE 105
PHOENIX, AZ 85016
(602) 952-2410

4703 SOUTH LAKESHORE DRIVE
SUITE 1
TEMPE, AZ 85282
(480) 897-6289

407 WEST CONGRESS STREET
SUITE 103
TUCSON, AZ 85701
(520) 670-6334

TELEPHONE FOR HEARING IMPAIRED
(602) 952-0170

President George W. Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Having recently observed the one-year anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, we must revisit the lessons learned from one of the greatest catastrophes in U.S. history. Extensive investigations revealed among other things that water resource and development projects sanctioned and constructed by the Army Corps of Engineers contributed to this catastrophe. Even the Corps' own Katrina report, issued on June 1, 2006, concluded that design flaws in the levees were largely responsible for the devastating flooding of New Orleans. As such, the current operations of the Corp must be reformed to ensure greater accountability in federal civil works projects.

On July 19, 2006, the Senate passed S. 728, the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA), which included many common sense reforms aimed at addressing some of the post-Katrina concerns. We thank you for your support thus far of the Senate-passed provisions and ask for your continued active support as WRDA moves through conference.

The WRDA bill passed by Senate incorporates recommendations made by several entities, including the National Academy of Sciences and the U.S. Army Inspector General, which called for independent peer review of Corps projects that are costly, controversial, or critical to public safety. Recently, the American Society of Civil Engineers and the Independent Levee Investigation team, a blue-ribbon panel led by a University of California engineering professor, issued a statement supporting such review. S. 728 also establishes a process for Safety Assurance Review panels to ensure the protection of public health, safety and welfare by assessing the design and construction of future flood protection projects. Moreover, the Senate version creates a cabinet-level working group to revise the Corps' outdated planning guidelines so that all future projects serve the needs of the nation. And finally, the Senate bill requires mitigation of any unavoidable environment destruction caused by Corps projects.

Unfortunately, the House version of WRDA, passed in July 2005, was adopted in a pre-Katrina world and does not contain these critical reforms. By retaining the status quo, the Corps would remain plagued by a growing backlog of construction and maintenance activities, many of

which are funded without appropriate Congressional authorization or may not be reflective of the Corps' mission.

The American public deserves sound project planning they can trust. We were encouraged that you endorsed meaningful Corps reform in your Statement of Administration Policy during the consideration of S. 728. Likewise, in an August 24 proposal entitled "*12 Actions for Change*," the Corps of Engineers called for "*dynamic independent review*" and "*an immediate review of current planning and guidance and design standards*," which mirrors the Senate-passed reforms. It is clear that your administration recognizes how critical it is to reform the Army Corps of Engineers in an effort to enhance for our nation's infrastructure and safety. Again, we thank you for your support thus far and as conference moves forward, we respectfully request your continued, active support for the reform provisions in S. 728.

Thank you and we look forward to working with you on this matter.

Sincerely,

Norman D. Feigal

John McLean